4. OVERCOMING PROBLEMS WITH TREE REGISTRATION AND LOG TRANSPORT PERMITS FOR SMALLHOLDER TREE FARMERS IN LEYTE

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A survey will be undertaken of smallholder tree farmers, including tree farmers who have registered their plantations with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The list of registered tree farmers held in each DENR Community Environment and Natural Resource Office (CENRO) will be used as part of the sampling method. Permission to access to this list has already been obtained. Each tree farmer selected will be interviewed and their experiences, both positive and negative, documented. There are likely to be many other smallholders who are growing timber trees for commercial purposes but who have not registered them and their experiences may be different to those with registered tree farms. As Analysis of smallholder experiences, combined with information from other activities in ACIAR project ASEM/2003/052, will form the basis of policy recommendations to the Executive Director of DENR Region 8 and will also provide a baseline against which project impacts can be assessed.

BACKGROUND

Forest industry development for both economic and environmental reasons is a high priority for the Philippines, as indicated in the Revised Master Plan for Forest Development (Revised MPFD) issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in 2003. In particular, the role of ‘forests and forestry in poverty eradication and support of sustainable livelihood’ has been recognised in the Revised MPFD as being one of the important new developments in forestry in the Philippines.

In Eastern Visayas (Region 8), current forest-based industries require a substantial volume of timber per year and are expected to continue their dependence on timber coming from sources outside the region and still from the region’s natural rainforests as source of illegally-harvested timber (Pogosa 2005, Bonife 2005). DENR (1990) has estimated the total demand for timber (for lumber production alone) in Region 8 range from 89,878 to 125,970 m³ per year for the 15 years commencing in 2000 DENR (2003) reported, however, that the supply of timber in the region has been drastically reduced following the imposition of a logging moratorium in natural forests in the region. While some of the shortfall in timber can be made up from existing plantations and tree farms, there is still a perceived shortfall for locally sourced supplies of timber products including lumber, poles, and piles.

In Leyte, the supply of timber has been decreasing in the recent years, especially for premium timber species including molave (Vitex parviflora) and narra (Pterocarpus indicus), while the demand for high quality lumber and furniture products has been consistently increasing (Mangaoang et al. 2002). These authors also reported that even the supply of exotic timbers from plantation forests is insufficient to meet demand for timber products. Forest industry development, therefore, warrants high priority in Leyte in view of the recognized twin problem of shortage in timber supply, hence high reliance on imports from
other provinces and even other countries, and the slow uptake of forestry especially by smallholders tree farmers.

Research experiences from ASEM/2000/088 Redevelopment of a Timber Industry Following Extensive Clearing\(^1\) (referred to as the ACIAR Smallholder Forestry Project) suggest that improving uptake of forestry particularly by smallholder farmers requires that financial returns are attractive and better access to market is ensured. In order for smallholders to access formal markets outside the immediate locale of their tree farm, they must obtain a transport permit. To obtain such a permit, it is a condition that they first register their trees with the DENR (DENR Memorandum 99, 1999).

While tree registration had been a major requirement to marketing of tree products from established tree farms and plantations, few tree farmers or plantation owners had been able to register their trees with DENR. For example, in a survey of 200 households in four communities in Leyte Province (Emtage et al. 2004), it was found out that only 2% or 4 respondents had been able to register their trees, and only 15% knew how to do so. There are currently large differences in the numbers of tree farms registered with Community Environment and Natural Resources Offices (CENROs) in Leyte. This is despite all CENROs having large numbers of tree farms within their boundaries. There were 523 tree farms registered in CENRO Maasin and 207 in CENRO Tacloban compared with only 24 in CENRO Baybay and 42 in CENRO Albuera. It appears that the differences in the number of tree farm registrations are largely due to the way in which the tree registration policy has been implemented. One of the foci of the new ACIAR project will be to investigate the impediments to tree registration by looking at experiences and perceptions of smallholders, and also examining the reasons behind differences in the rates of tree registration and policy implementation between CENROs by undertaking discussions with various DENR staff.

Arrangements for log transport permits and the way the log transport regulation is implemented as viewed by the smallholder tree farmers also deserve close examination. The output of the research is expected to benefit smallholder tree farmers who wish to register their established tree farms as well as those who are willing to obtain log transport permits. In the longer periods, the output of the study is expected to influence the DENR policy and regulations at the national level that will facilitate greater rates of tree registration and improve log transport arrangements particularly of tree products coming from smallholder tree farms.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED**

The research problem addressed by this activity is how can the current low rates of tree registration and problems with obtaining transport permits can be improved. The research problem is associated with Objective 1 (Activity 1.1) ‘To assist DENR to overcome policy implementation constraints to tree registration and log transport currently restricting access to markets’ outlined in the ACIAR project document (Herbohn et al. 2004).

The following research questions will be addressed in this research activity as follows:

1. *What have been the major impediments to tree registration and log transport by the smallholder tree farmers, as perceived by those who have registered tree farms, and as perceived by those who have commercial but unregistered tree farms?*

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\(^1\) ASEM/2000/088 Redevelopment of a Timber Industry Following Extensive Land Clearing was the first collaborative research project undertaking between the College of Forestry, Leyte State University and the University of Queensland with the aim of examining the requirements and opportunities for more rapid development of farm and community forestry in the province of Leyte.
This will lead to a better understanding of the key factors that affect rates of registration of established tree farms as well as the constraints to log transport on the perspective of the smallholders and other key stakeholders.

2. Why are there differences in the rates of tree registration among CENROs?

This research question deals with the perceptions and experiences of smallholders who have, and have not registered trees, on implementation of the policies by the various CENROs. This will lead to examination of how CENROs in various communities implement policies on tree registration and log transport approval, as well as the justifications behind the adopted approach to such policy implementation. The views, comments or suggestions of smallholders and other stakeholders will also be obtained concerning the tree registration and log transport policies and their implementation, and what can be done to improve rates of tree registration and facilitate log transport approval.

3. How can these major impediments be remedied, in relation to effective arrangements and mechanisms, action plans, and responsible stakeholders?

The views of smallholders and other important stakeholders will be sought on how the major impediments identified above can be best overcome. This would lead to developing a set of alternative arrangements or mechanisms as well as action plans which take into account the suggestions made by smallholders and other key stakeholders. These sets of alternatives and action plans can serve as guides and an effective reference for DENR in the process of improving policies on tree registration and log transport as well as their implementation.

4. How can tree registration and log transport approvals in smallholder tree farms be facilitated to improve access to market and financial returns?

Facilitation will be addressed in terms of policy recommendations and implementation mechanisms or arrangements. This research question is an opportunity to produce general and specific recommendations from the smallholder tree farmers and other concerned stakeholders to improve existing policies on tree registration and log transport approval and their implementation, so as to provide a more convenient environment for harvesting and marketing of timber from smallholder tree farms, consistent with the forest protection regulations of DENR. Specific recommendations can also be generated on how the mechanisms and arrangements for tree registration and log transport approval can be improved.

GENERAL RESEARCH APPROACH

There are two possible research approaches that could be implemented to address the research problem and research questions outlined above. The first is to use an action research methodology informed by multiple case studies of experiences of smallholders in registering trees and gaining transport approvals. Such an action research methodology would require the close involvement of community members, DENR, LSUs and other key stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the research. Action research through genuine people’s participation is arguably the most effective approach to encourage smallholders and other important stakeholders to share confidently their real views and perceptions about matters related to tree registration and log transport approval. While needs, issues or problems are presented by smallholder tree farmers through researchers’ facilitative role, effective measures and alternatives that are adoptable, in the process, are also generated in favour of facilitating tree registration and log transport approvals for smallholder tree farmers. The conducting of action research and detailed multiple case studies requires considerable expertise on behalf of the researcher. Action research involves a substantial commitment of time from the key researchers and is difficult to implement. In addition, while
case studies produce a deep understanding of the problem, they require a high levels of skill from the investigator in the planning, implementation and analysis stages. Case studies produce large amounts of qualitative data that is challenging and sometimes difficult to analyse in a rigorous manner. Importantly, well conducted case studies require substantial human resources.

The second approach is to undertake a survey of smallholders including both those who have and have not registered trees. This survey would involve teams of enumerators interviewing smallholders about their experiences using a questionnaire containing both closed and open-ended questions. Surveys can be difficult to plan and implement (Cedamon and Emtage 2005). However, data collected through surveys, especially those using closed questions, are easier to analyse compared to qualitative data collected in by case study. Data can be analysed using standard statistical packages such as SPSS.

Initially, it was envisaged that considerable project resources would be available for the conducting of research associated with tree registration and transport permits. Under these circumstances, the case study/action research approach was favoured because of the rich data resulting from the interviews with smallholders and the empowerment of stakeholders that results from being involved in the research process. However, due to budget constraints and the need to introduce additional project activities, it was necessary to reduce the scope of research dealing with tree registration and transport approvals. For this reason, the second approach (i.e. a survey of tree farmers) was selected as the most appropriate methods within the financial constraints of the project. The survey approach was selected because it could be undertaken in conjunction with a broader survey of the socio-economic characteristics and attitudes of smallholder tree farmers to be undertaken as part of other project activities. The subsuming of the tree registration and transport survey into the broader survey results in substantial cost saving. Fewer questions than originally proposed will be able to to be included in the combined survey; however, most of the originally desired information will still be collected. The main disadvantage of this approach will be the loss of participation of the key stakeholders in the research process. Saying this, however, research being conducted as part of activity 1.3 (see Herbohn et al. 2005 in this proceedings) will be conducted using an action research methodology and all of the key stakeholder groups will be represented.

RESEARCH METHODS AND SAMPLING STRATEGY

Questions relating to the experiences and attitudes of tree farmers in relation to tree registration and transport approvals will be incorporated into a questionnaire to investigate the social and economics factors that affect the management of plantations. The questionnaire will be administered via interview to each tree farmer whose tree farm is sampled as part of Activity 2.2. Where possible, the questionnaire will be administered by the field supervisor at the time that the tree farms are sampled, after enumerators have commenced measuring the trees. Where this is not possible (i.e. owner not on-site), the contact details of the owner will be recorded for later contact by one of the two field supervisors. The questionnaire will comprise seven sections, one of which will specifically deal with tree registration experiences and another will contain questions which relate to experiences with gaining transport approvals.

In conjunction with the survey, participatory community workshops or focus group discussions will be held in a number of communities, that will encourage the participation of husbands and wives from the sampled households. These meetings will provide the researchers the opportunity to validate the authenticity of the data collected during the individual household interview and acquire other pertinent information that may be revealed by the smallholder during discussions. One important consideration is to ensure that the sampled respondents feel comfortable, relaxed and confident during the process of data collection. Important
baseline information (e.g. community profiles) will also be collected from local offices whenever available.

Information to be collected may include the following:

- Established tree farms and plantations that are registered and not registered
- Details of tree registration, cutting permit and log transport policies
- Community profiles (both socio-economic and biophysical)
- Tree farm and tree farming information
- Knowledge, perceptions and experiences about tree registration and log transport policies (smallholders, timber dealers and processors, DENR, other stakeholders)
- Major identifiable impediments to tree registration and log transport approvals
- Suggestions and recommendations to overcome the identified impediments.

In addition to the survey of smallholders undertaken, insights into the tree registration and transport approvals will be provided by conducting a policy workshop involving DENR staff (including CENROs) as part of Activity 1.3. This policy workshop will explore:

- CENROs’ understanding and interpretation of tree registration, cutting permit and log transport policies;
- CENROs’ implementing approaches of tree registration, cutting permit and log transport policies for tree farms and plantations;
- CENROs’ perceptions and experiences on tree registration and log transport approvals by smallholder tree farmers and plantation owners;
- Views of smallholders and other stakeholders on CENROs’ implementation of tree registration, cutting permit and log transport policies; and
- Suggestions and recommendations on how tree registration and log transport approvals be facilitated to improve access to market

EXPECTED RESULTS AND OUTPUTS

The expected results and outputs of the research activity, including the practical applications of the identified outcomes, include:

- Identification and better understanding of key factors affecting tree registration and log transport approvals from the perspective of smallholders and commercial tree plantation owners.
- Recommendations from smallholders and other stakeholders for set of alternatives to overcome the identified impediments to tree registration and log transport approval
- Understanding of reasons for differences in tree registration rates among CENROs
- Information about CENROs’ implementation strategies and practices for tree registration and log transport approval
- Perceptions of smallholders and other stakeholders about these implementation strategies and recommendations to improve policy implementation
- General and specific recommendations and views to facilitate tree registration and log transport approval that can lead to smallholders’ better access to market and better price for their tree products

The applications to which these outputs may be put, or practical outcomes, include:

- Input to improving existing policies on tree registration and log transport
- Input to design of improved mechanisms and arrangements and action plans for tree registration and log transport approval
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- Improving regulatory framework for tree registration and log transport approval that favors smallholder tree farmers
- Improving market access and prices of tree products for smallholder tree farms
- Expanding the number of smallholder farmers engaged in tree farming in support of DENR’s reforestation activity
- Increasing Leyte’s local supply for timber, thus reducing dependence on imported timber; may help supply timber demand in nearby areas

LINKS WITH OTHER PROJECT ACTIVITIES

This activity will be undertaken in conjunction with Activity 2.2(iii). This project activity will draw information and input from the output (under Activity 1.3) of a workshop that will review existing DENR practices and policies adversely affecting the ability of smallholder tree farmers to access markets for their tree products, particularly the tree registration, harvesting and log transport approval policies.

This project activity may also feed pertinent information to the development of pilot scheme that is intended to facilitate the establishment of formal markets for tree products from existing tree farms as stated in Activity 2.3. The output of this research activity will eventually produce information necessary for Activity 3.2, namely a further policy workshop that will refine recommendations for policy reforms the output of which will then be submitted to DENR Secretary through appropriate channels.

Activity 1.1 also provides information that will help with achieving the following project outputs:

- 1.2a Increased rates of tree registration
- 1.2b Increased rates of log transport approvals and harvest approvals where appropriate
- 1.2c Greater access to timber markets and increased prices
- 1.3 Improved regulatory framework for tree registration and transport approvals
- 2.4b Improved management regimes for tree farms
- 3.1 Recommendations on smallholder tree farming systems matched to livelihood strategies
- 3.2 Recommendations on policy reforms based on project findings

DISCUSSION

Experiences of tree farmers in registering their trees, and attitudes of those who have not undertaken tree registration, can potentially generate valuable information in relation to policy and regulatory reform relating to forestry property rights of smallholders. The bottom line to this kind of survey research is the generation of more reliable information, which will largely depend on the effectiveness of the research approach and particularly the strategy to encourage respondents to provide genuine information. Previous research experiences at LSU College of Forestry reveal the effectiveness of student research activity in gathering important but seemingly confidential information, especially from smallholders engaged in both legal and illegal forestry activities, as well as from timber dealers and processors. Potential student research projects, therefore, may be helpful in the process of generating more reliable information in relation to the research questions presented above.

Another challenge will be to obtain a representative sample of tree farmers. The details of the sampling design are yet to be resolved. Various protocols will need to be followed to obtain the support of officials in the barangays where tree farms are sampled. Care will be needed in questionnaire drafting, and testing of questions and their sequencing through trial
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interviews. This research activity provides an opportunity to gain a clear understanding of what is perceived to be a difficulty policy area in smallholder forestry.

REFERENCES

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